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## Catholic Extension Recognizes Seven Lumen Christi Award Finalists

*Faith leaders across the nation announced as finalists for organization's highest honor*

CHICAGO (August 10, 2021) – The Lumen Christi Award is [Catholic Extension](#)'s highest honor given to people who radiate and reveal the light of Christ present in the communities where they serve.

Nominations for Catholic Extension's 44th annual Lumen Christi Award were submitted by diocesan bishops from across the U.S. and its territories earlier this year, and now a diverse group of inspiring finalists are being recognized.

Seven of this year's 34 nominees have been chosen as award finalists and will receive \$10,000 to support and enhance their ministry. From among these finalists, the 2021-22 Lumen Christi Award recipient will ultimately be selected and receive a \$25,000 grant, along with an additional \$25,000 grant for the nominating diocese. The award recipient will be revealed in September 2021.

"During this past year in which many of our schools, church buildings, and places of business 'went dark,' we are reminded that the light of Christ *never* went out in our midst," said Father Jack Wall, President of Catholic Extension. "The stories of these Lumen Christi Award finalists reveal the many places and ways that the light of Christ has been shining brightly all along."

Following are glimpses into each of the finalists' stories:

- **Sr. Julia Huiskamp, D.C.** (Diocese of Belleville, Ill.) – A member of the Daughters of Charity, Sr. Julia Huiskamp, D.C. has served children and families living in the housing projects of East St. Louis in the Diocese of Belleville for the past 35 years. In 1986 she converted a former drug house into a classroom, and founded the first Griffin Center, which has since expanded to five public housing locations, serving 350 children. The Griffin Center sites offer children living in poverty, a safe environment to come to after school and during the summer months, where they have access to tutors, meals, and recreational activities. These programs represent an innovative continuation of the Catholic Church's long history of providing education to the poor.
- **Fr. Brian Oestreich** (Diocese of New Ulm, Minn.) – Fr. Brian Oestreich leads the Spirit of Life Area Faith Community, which encompasses four churches on the western border of Minnesota. Realizing the often-hidden poverty that exists in their area, parishioners have worked closely with Fr. Oestreich to create ministries that feed and clothe thousands each year—a ministry which now spans three states and 5 dioceses. In doing so they have come to realize that when the Church goes out to the peripheries it comes back alive. He said, "I've instilled in my community their call through their baptism to do the good works of Christ and the corporal works of mercy."

- **Fr. Stan Jaszek** (Diocese of Fairbanks, Alaska) – Fr. Stan serves four missions in the Native Alaskan villages of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region, along the coast of the Bering Sea. He has dedicated his time to develop relationships founded in trust and respect, through immersing himself in the Yup'ik Eskimo traditions. With open arms, he invites people to deepen their relationship with God while affirming the spirituality and culture of the people he serves. For 115 years, Catholic Extension has helped fund essential ministries in the remote villages of Alaska, including Fr. Jaszek.
- **Sr. María Imelda Quechol & Sr. Eloísa Torralba Aquino, M.A.G.** (Diocese of Knoxville, Tenn.) – The ministry of these two sisters spans eight counties, impacting the lives of over 10,000 people, serving a largely immigrant population. The sisters offer a range of spiritual and human support that is much needed in these communities. For many years, Catholic Extension has supported the ministry of these remarkable sisters who bring the compassionate face of Christ to the poor and forgotten of East Tennessee.
- **Racheal Jacoby** (Diocese of San Angelo, Texas) – In 1913 Catholic Extension helped build a small mission church in Melvin, Texas. 108 years later, Racheal Jacoby, a young Catholic mother living in Melvin, took responsibility to lead the renovation of that church so that it could continue to serve families like hers for many more years. Parishioners celebrated the first Mass in the newly renovated church in September 2020. Jacoby's efforts to repair and renovate St. Francis Xavier Mission has helped revitalized this rural Catholic community located in the geographic heart of Texas.
- **Fr. Bob Goodyear, S.T.** (Diocese of Jackson, Miss.) – As a young priest, Fr. Bob was sent to Holy Rosary Indian Mission in Mississippi. He learned all he could about the culture of the local Choctaw people, even learning their language, and creating a Vatican-approved translation of the Mass in Choctaw. Father Goodyear seeks to develop leaders in the community to pass the faith on to the next generation. As he often says in his homilies, "You cannot believe in God if you don't believe in yourself, that God not only created you, He believes in you." Catholic Extension has supported Holy Rosary Indian Mission since 1926.
- **Jenny & Ben Black Bear III** (Diocese of Rapid City, S.D.) – Jenny and Ben Black Bear III are members of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe from South Dakota. They grew up in the same Catholic community they now serve, St. Francis Mission. Among the many things they do, the Black Bears help youth on the reservation experience the joy and hope of their Catholic faith and Lakota values. Since 2015 they have helped hundreds in their community prepare for baptism, first Communion, reconciliation, and Confirmation. Catholic Extension has worked in solidarity with the mission for many years, supporting lay leaders including the Black Bears.

*For more information on the 2021-2022 Lumen Christi Award finalists, visit*

<http://www.catholicextension.org/finalists>

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**About Catholic Extension:** Founded in 1905, Catholic Extension works in solidarity with people in America's poorest regions to build up vibrant and transformative Catholic faith communities. For more information visit [www.catholicextension.org](http://www.catholicextension.org); follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/catholicextension](https://www.facebook.com/catholicextension) or on Twitter at [@CathExtension](https://twitter.com/CathExtension).